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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

VIA COURIER

May 18, 1999

Magalie Roman Salas, Esq., Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 Twelfth Street, SW Room TWA-325  
Washington, DC 20554

**RE:** *In Re Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service* (CC Docket No. 96-45)

Dear Ms. Salas:

Personal  
Communications  
Industry  
Association

On May 17, 1999, Mary McDermott, Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff for Government Relations and Angela Giancarlo, Director of Federal Regulatory Affairs for the Personal Communications Industry Association ("PCIA") together with Michele Farquhar of Hogan & Hartson met with Lisa Zaina and Ellen Blackler of the Common Carrier Bureau ("CCB").

I enclose for the record a copy of a written *ex parte* presentation issued to Ms. Zaina and Ms. Blackler. The presentation discusses issues related to the above-referenced proceeding.

Pursuant to §1.1206(b) of the Commission's rules, two copies of this letter and presentation for the referenced docket are hereby filed with the Secretary's office. In addition, I am sending copies of this notice to each of the Commission employees listed below. Please refer questions in connection with this matter to me at 703-535-7487.

Respectfully submitted,



Angela E. Giancarlo, Esq.  
Director, Federal Regulatory Affairs

cc: Ellen Blackler  
Lisa Zaina

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**To Promote Wireless "Competitive Networks," the FCC Must  
Ensure That Wireless Carriers Have A Meaningful Opportunity  
to Qualify for Universal Service Funding**

*A presentation of the Personal Communications Industry Association  
May 1999*

- **Wireless carriers can compete with ILECs to provide universal service to consumers in high cost and rural areas -- provided that the FCC acts to remove barriers to entry in the current system of federal universal service support.**
- **A critical step is for the FCC to clear the way for wireless carriers to receive Eligible Telecommunications Carrier ("ETC") this designation pursuant to Section 214(e) of the Act.** Although wireless carriers have obtained designation from a limited number of state commissions, they are encountering difficulties in many other states.
  - These states have already granted ETC status to certain CMRS carriers: Arkansas (Sprint PCS); California (Sprint PCS); Puerto Rico (Centennial Cellular); Washington (US Cellular); and Wisconsin (US Cellular).
  - To help move the process forward, the FCC should reaffirm its commitment to the principle that all carriers that are capable of providing supported services, regardless of technology, are eligible for ETC designation. Furthermore, the FCC should specifically list CMRS as a type of carrier that has such capability. *Universal Service First Report and Order ("Order")*, ¶¶ 145-47.
  - The FCC should seek comment on necessary clarifications and modifications to its existing rules to ensure that the ETC designation process is not a barrier to entry into the market for providing universal service.
- **Although the FCC specifically held that states cannot impose additional requirements beyond the statutory minimum, certain states are nonetheless considering doing so.** The FCC should reaffirm that the only criteria that states may consider are those listed in Section 214(e)(1) of the Act, i.e. that a carrier: (1) offers designated services, (2) throughout the service area, and (3) generally advertises their availability.
  - Some states are taking the position that only those carriers that already provide ubiquitous subsidized service should be deemed eligible. Unfortunately, this approach would preclude any new entrant (i.e. non-ILECs) from ever receiving support.
  - The FCC must clarify that the requirement that carriers "offer" designated services throughout a service area is met when the carrier does so within a reasonable period after receiving its ETC designation and before actually receiving support -- not that it must offer the services before it can receive its ETC designation. *See Order*, ¶ 137.
- **The FCC should clarify that wireless carriers are entitled to receive ETC status without relinquishing their Section 332(c)(3) exemption from state entry and rate regulation.** *See Order*, ¶¶ 145, 147.
  - Contrary to certain states' positions, a CMRS carrier can receive ETC status even

if it is not certified as a LEC by the individual state commission.

- Contrary to arguments put forth by certain ILECs, CMRS carriers need not make any showing regarding the "affordability" of their rates.
- **The list of the services defined as eligible for support, 47 CFR § 54.101, must not be interpreted in a narrow way that could unnecessarily exclude wireless carriers from designation.**
  - Most broadband PCS and other CMRS carriers already provide the supported services: single-party voice grade access to the public switch network, with touch-tone type dialing and access to local usage, long distance, emergency services, operator services, and directory assistance.
  - To ensure competitive and technological neutrality, the FCC should clarify that the "access to local usage" requirement can be satisfied by any calling plan with local usage, regardless of the number of "free" minutes included and the definition of which calls are "local."
  - The FCC should reaffirm that CMRS carriers may satisfy the "access to emergency services" requirement pending developments of wireless E-911 technology.
  - The FCC should clarify that CMRS carriers may satisfy the "toll limitation for low-income customers" by offering pre-paid plans designed for low income customers.
- **The FCC must not allow the states to unfairly deny ETC status to wireless providers by permitting the states to (1) define the geographic service areas of carriers operating outside rural telco areas, or (2) consider "public interest" issues within rural telco areas.**
- **In cases where states lack jurisdiction over CMRS carriers or unreasonably refuse to designate a CMRS carrier as an ETC, the FCC should consider using its authority pursuant to Section 214(e)(6) to pre-empt and grant such designation.**
- **The FCC should proceed rapidly to remedy other universal service problems that disadvantage wireless and other new entrants. The Commission should:**
  - follow through on its commitment to "portability" by ensuring that CMRS carriers and other competitive ETCs receive the same amount of financial support as ILECs.
  - fix the "glitch" in its rules that effectively delays the timing of support to competitive entrants.
  - limit the overall size of the fund by targeting support to consumers in the highest-cost area, where support is truly needed.